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Sermon for Reformation Anniversary.

MATT. 16, 16—18.

Three hundred and eighty-six years ago, on the 31st day of October, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous ninety-five theses, directed against the abuse of papal indulgences, to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This was the first public act which led to the great Reformation. It was the inauguration of a new era for the whole world, of an era of blessedness for the whole human race. "Our religious freedom, our enjoyment of personal liberty, our private and public institutions of learning, our advancement in science, literature, and art — all these blessings date back to the strokes of that monk's hammer on the 31st of October, 1517. They are the natural outgrowth of the great work of the Reformation." Every unprejudiced student of history will admit that the most beneficent results have grown from Luther's work for the world at large.

But the great change for the better in the world at large, the reformation of society, of family, and state, was not the principal part in Luther's great work. Luther was not a statesman; he was a churchman. His Reformation was, first of all, a reformation of the Church, and it was his success in the reformation of the Church that brought about, as a natural result, the great blessings for society and state which, to this day, the world is enjoying. It was the Church, the Bride of Christ, that was bleeding from a thousand wounds. The Church was the maid who for centuries had been ill-treated like a slave, who had been deprived of her brightest gems and jewels, abused, cast into the filthy dungeon of papal tyranny, and was now, apparently, nearing her end. — But no, Christ Jesus, in whose mouth no guile was ever found, had given the promise

and for benevolent purposes, they must seek to gain heaven. In short, he almost did away completely with the Christian religion, as taught by the Lord Jesus Christ and by His apostles.

But how could a great part of the Christian world ever submit to the authority of a pope? Did not Jesus say, "One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren?" This was very shrewdly accomplished. Since olden times the defenders of papal supremacy have pointed to our text in support of their claim that the pope is Christ's vicegerent upon earth. In our text we read, "*And Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.*" Roman Catholics look upon this text as an invincible bulwark in their favor. Do not you Protestants hear, they say, what your own Bible says and declares of Peter? how the Lord Jesus placed Peter at the head of the Church and created him the first pope and has built upon him His Church on earth? Peter was the first pope in Rome. Christ gave to Peter the keys of heaven and hell, and Peter transferred his office to his successor on the papal throne, and thus there has been an uninterrupted succession, an unbroken line of popes to the present day, all deriving their power and authority from Peter, and, through Peter, from Christ. "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church," these words are emblazoned in great letters of gold round the interior of the dome of St. Peter's Church at Rome. — But let us examine the text and see if Peter was made a pope. Christ had not asked Peter alone, but all His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter acted the spokesman for all and uttered in the name of all the glorious confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This confession pleased the Lord so much that He addressed Peter and said to him, "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter." Now Peter is a Greek word and means a stone, or *a piece of a rock*. But the Lord does not add and say, as the Catholic version puts it, Upon *THEE*, or upon that *piece of a rock* I will build my Church. He says, "Upon this *rock* I will build my Church." Two different words are used here. To show the difference between the two words the Greek text says, "Thou art 'Petros' and upon this 'petra' I will build my Church." The rock upon which the Church is built can, therefore, not be Peter; it must be something else. And what is it? It is the rock which is contained in Peter's glorious confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God:" it is the Rock of Ages, it is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Upon Him

is the Church built, not upon Peter, or a pope, or any mortal man. Besides, it is almost positive that Peter has never been in Rome. And the same power of the keys which Christ gave to Peter He also gave to all His disciples, as may be seen from the 18th chapter of Matthew, where Jesus says to all His followers, "Verily, I say unto *you*, Whatsoever *ye* shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever *ye* shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." The Roman Catholic claim of papal authority is void, it has not the shadow of a foundation in the Bible.

This was the great fundamental error, that a pope was created in the Church, that the Lord Jesus was pushed aside and a mortal man was placed in His stead, that the voice of Christ was hushed and the voice of the pope was heard. Ever since the pope had put up his seat in the temple of God the Church was corrupted and defiled. The grossest superstition prevailed among people and clergy. In the Middle Ages even popes and high dignitaries of the Church were professed infidels and blasphemers, and given to licentiousness and immorality. Even Bellarmine, the most ardent defender of the papacy and ablest Roman Catholic writer, admits that a few years prior to the Reformation scarcely a trace was left of the Christian religion. The gates of hell had their day then, and Satan sought by all means to prevail against the Church of God.

II.

Now, in the second part, let us consider how the Church was restored to its original purity by the blessed work of the Reformation.

Luther was not the first to attack the papacy and its pernicious doctrines. John Huss attempted a reformation of the Church one hundred years before Luther. But the movement which he inaugurated in Bohemia was crushed, and this bold confessor of evangelical truth was publicly burned at the stake. In the latter part of the fourteenth century there was John Wycliffe in England. He studied the Scriptures, translated the Bible, and proclaimed the Gospel truth with great force and effect. His opponents did all in their power to have him put out of the way. But he died a natural death, before he could be summoned like John Huss. His followers, however, were persecuted and put to death, and his body was exhumed and burned. God's time had not come yet, when these men appeared. But the Lord could not see His Church be utterly destroyed and annihilated. He had to make true His promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church. Even in the darkest

times the Church was not altogether extinct. There have been true Christians always in all the ages of papal misrule, not only children who died in their baptismal grace, but also adults who did not believe in the pernicious doctrines of the papacy, but in simple faith relied on Jesus', the Savior's, merits and entered the eternal paradise of heaven when they departed this life. God knew and claimed those who were His own. Even then He could say, as of old, "I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." But when God's time came, He at last stemmed the tide of ignorance and corruption and through Luther, His chosen vessel, He restored to its original purity and glory His glorious Church.

Luther did not establish a new church. He is not the founder of a new religion. He was not a man like Mohammed, the lying prophet, who proclaimed a new god and produced a new code of morals for his followers. You may search Luther's writings from beginning to end and you will not find a single doctrine which is new. It is true that Luther seceded from a new church, which had developed in the course of time, from the Roman Catholic Church, from the corrupted papal assembly. But Luther did not secede from the old, true Christian Church. He remained in that Church, as Huss, and Wycliffe, and all the martyrs who suffered death under the papal misrule remained therein in spite of the pope's excommunication. Luther simply restored to its original purity the old true Christian Church, the Church of Christ, the Church of the prophets and apostles. He simply cleansed the Church of all those false doctrines, heresies, errors, and abominations with which Satan had defiled it. He again made known among men the Bible, the Word of God, which the pope had concealed and withheld from the people. He again proclaimed the Gospel, the glad tidings that there is help for us poor sinners and that our help comes from God alone, that in our miserable, sinful state we cannot help ourselves and gain heaven by our own righteousness and good deeds, but that God in His infinite mercy and loving-kindness has sent into this world His beloved Son Jesus Christ and had Him bleed and die on the cross for us all. He emphasized faith and showed conclusively that by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, as St. Paul says, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. Luther was the apocalyptic angel whom John saw flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give glory to Him."

May the Lord grant us His grace that we retain God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure! Let us not yield to those who undervalue the great work of the Reformation by their attempts to make an improvement on Luther's doctrine. As little as an improvement can be made on the Bible, just as little can Luther's doctrine be improved. It is the doctrine of the Word of God and,

God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure
Shall to eternity endure.

Amen.

H. S.

Sermon on Ps. 119, 105.

This text is taken from the Psalms. The Psalms are the prayer-book of the Bible. That Christian is to be pitied who has not learned to pray, to sing, to weep, and to rejoice with David, Asaph, and others in the Psalms. Here in the Psalms the child of God can always find expression for the joy and the cries of his heart. — Learn to know these Psalms better, my dear Christians, there is a holy fire in them that can fill us with glowing joy in the midst of this cold and chilling world. — Our text is taken from the 119th Psalm, the longest of all the Psalms. It contains 176 verses. But it is just as deep and broad as it is long. It is a hymn on the Word of God in 176 variations, — one subject, but not one repetition; one theme, but not one idle word. The entire Psalm is evidence that the Psalmist spoke the truth when, in the 111th verse, he declares of the Word of God: "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." Some may fall asleep while reading this, the longest of the Psalms, but whoever can say of the Word of God that it is the rejoicing of his heart, he will read and reread this very Psalm with increasing delight. For the present let us attend to the 105th verse and learn from it that

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE ONLY LIGHT THAT LEADS
US TO HEAVEN,

for it alone is:

- I. *Of the highest authority,*
- II. *Perfectly clear, and*
- III. *Entirely sufficient for this purpose.*

I.

In matters pertaining to this earthly life only, God has generally left man to learn and advance by means of his senses and his experience. For instance, God has never told us how to treat cer-

tain bodily diseases. By painstaking study and careful experimentation man has advanced in his knowledge of diseases and their cure. Just so it is with political science, commerce, shipping, railroading, and hundreds of other things that pertain to this earthly life. God has never finally and authoritatively answered such questions as these: "Which is the safest and quickest mode of crossing the ocean?" or: "Which is the best treatment to cure typhoid fever?" or: "Is a republican form of government to be preferred to a monarchical system?" In trying to answer such and the like questions man has stumbled along, correcting and changing, sometimes for the better and often for the worse. Yet no one can say: "God has long since authoritatively settled these questions." There is one question, however, which God has not left for man to answer. There is one question which God has Himself answered for all men. There is a question which God has settled beyond all doubt. Which is this question? It is this: "What must I do to be saved?" This question concerns eternity, judgment, heaven, hell—final and everlasting ruin and misery, final and everlasting happiness. The answer to this question God has not left for us to guess at or to experiment with. It is too serious to be trifled with. This question God has Himself answered for us all and for all times. Yes, and He answered it by giving us His own Word. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He would have all men come unto the knowledge of the truth and be saved, and therefore He has spoken to us Himself in His Word, in His Bible, every word of which is His word. Tell me, then, can there be any higher authority than God? Can there be any word more trustworthy than God's own Word? Ah, my friends, no one dare say: How can I know the truth in religion? whom shall I trust? for God has Himself spoken; He has Himself, in His Word, given us the infallible light that is to lead us to heaven. And therefore we rejoice in the consciousness of certainty and safety, and say with the Psalmist: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." In God's Word we have the only right answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved?" We care not what church councils have decided, nor what the popes have taught, nor what the majority of men believe, nor what dreams or visions men have had. In this matter of salvation and eternity we have a higher authority, a better light than the wisdom of all mankind—it is the Word of the all-wise and true God. Blessed be the Lord who has not left us to the deceit and the vagaries of men, but has given us His own Word of Life! Let us always gratefully acknowledge this by accepting and confessing this Word to be our only lamp and our

only light on the way to heaven. Let none of us be offended when we hear of the great number or the knowledge, wisdom, or high position of those who think otherwise. Here is one wiser than the wisest of men, greater than the greatest of princes, higher than bishops or popes, it is God Himself. "Thy Word," therefore we say, "thy Word, O God, is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

How is it with you, beloved, have you ever been fascinated by the pomp and the glitter, the effrontery and high claims of popery? Have you admired the achievements of modern science? Beware of their deceitful allurements! They have absolutely no authority in this matter. Come, leave all other guides and lights. Choose the highest authority and say with the Psalmist: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Oh, blessed are they who accept that light which God Himself offers, they may say:

Thy Word is everlasting truth;
 How pure is every page!
 That holy Book shall guide our youth,
 And well support our age.
 'Tis like the sun, a heavenly light,
 That guides us all the day;
 And through the dangers of the night
 A lamp to lead our way.

II.

"But," says one, "is the Bible not difficult to understand? Do not many misunderstand it? How can it be our guide if we do not clearly see the way which it points out to us?" It is true, the popes have always tried to stigmatize the Word of God as ambiguous and dark. Their purpose is to displace the Holy Scripture and Christ so that they themselves, the popes, might occupy the place of highest authority. They dare not denounce the Bible as untrue, so they endeavor to rob us of it by telling us that we do not and cannot understand it. But in this the pope shows himself to be the true Antichrist who teaches the very opposite of that which Christ teaches. Did not Christ say: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"? Did not Christ say: "Search the Scriptures, . . . they are they which testify of me"? Did not Christ say: "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it"? And who is it now that tells us not to read, not to hear the Word of Christ because it is not clear and plain? Who? The Antichrist, the pope! Let us not give way to him, no, not for a moment, but let us rather

say to that bitter and treacherous foe of our Savior: "*O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? God shall smite thee, thou whited wall!*"—True it is that Peter says that there are in the letters of Paul "*some things hard to be understood, which they that be unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.*" This passage tells us that indeed *some things* in the Bible "*are hard to be understood.*" Thank God for it! That is to keep us all, even the wisest of us, the humble scholars and students of the Word of our God. God wants no masters of His Bible, but only scholars, humble scholars, therefore He has given us the things that are hard to be understood. But it does not tell us that all is hard. And that passage tells us also this that some wrest or abuse the Scriptures "*unto their own destruction.*" Well, did you ever see a blessing of God which some did not abuse to their own destruction? Does not Scripture and experience teach that even Christ, our glorious and precious Savior, is to some a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense? And did not St. Paul declare that though he preached the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation, yet he and his preaching were to some the savor of death unto death? But he solves this whole matter by telling us who they are to whom the Bible is unclear. 2 Cor. 4 he says: "*But if our Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*"

So you see, my friends, that the Bible is only dark to those whose minds are blinded by Satan, among whom the pope, of course, occupies a prominent position. But for us the Bible is clear, perfectly clear. "*It maketh wise the simple,*" says God. Not only the wise and educated are enlightened by it, but the simple also. "*The entrance of Thy Word giveth light,*" is the confession of all who hear and read God's Word faithfully. The Bible is the light of this world, in it shines the star of Jacob, the eternal Sun with healing in its wings.—O Christians, be not lured by the false lights of popery or the candle lights and Will-o'-the-wisps of reason and science, but choose the clear, true, plain, and simple Word of God as your light, guide, and lamp, and say again and again: "*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*"—This is a light clear enough even for our children, for St. Paul reminds Timothy that he knew the Scriptures from a child. And St. Peter calls it the "*sure word of prophecy*" whereunto we do well that we take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. Blessed are our eyes that see this light, and blessed all who choose it to be unto

them a lamp and a light, who say: "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart;" and:

How precious is the Book divine,

By inspiration given!

Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,

To guide our souls to heaven.

O'er all the straight and narrow way

Its radiant beams are cast;

A light whose never weary ray

Grows brightest at the last.

This Lamp, through all the tedious night

Of life shall guide our way,

Till we behold the clearer light

Of an eternal day.

III.

Aye, and in choosing God's Word to be our guide we have not only chosen one of the highest authority and of perfect clearness, but we are also sure of a guidance that is *entirely sufficient to bring us to heaven*.

One of the contentions of the secret and open enemies of God's Word has always been that the Bible is not sufficient, that it must be supplemented by the reason of man, or by the traditions of the church, or by the decrees and decisions of the popes. But such claims are only tricks by which the proud and crafty enemies of Christ wish to rob us of the light of God's precious Word. St. Paul expressly refers Timothy and us all to the Holy Scriptures as to that light *which is able to make us wise unto salvation*. He says: "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*." Here St. Paul explicitly declares that the man of God can, from the Scriptures alone, be *thoroughly furnished* unto every good work, and that the Bible in itself is able to make us wise unto salvation.

Now it is true, we do not claim that the Bible tells us everything that God could tell us. God does not wish to tell us all things in this world. He has reserved some things to be revealed in heaven, wherefore St. Paul says that "now we know in part," but it is just as true that all things that are necessary for our salvation, and which we need to know in order to reach heaven, the Bible does tell us.

If I point out to a man the way to Europe, I need not tell him all that he may happen to see on the way, I need not give him the technical name of every part of the steamer on which he is to travel. To direct him aright I need only tell him that which he must know in order to find his way. A true and good guide need not tell me everything, but only those things that are necessary for leading me aright. The Bible is entirely sufficient, because it tells us all we need to know in order to reach heaven. It reveals to us our sin and its curse, it shows us our Savior and His salvation, it teaches us that we are lost, helpless creatures who have deserved God's wrath and punishment, and it teaches us also that God does not wish to have any perish, but that all should come to repentance. It brings us the glad tidings that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Besides this it gives us the whole of those precious inspired words whereby we are instructed, comforted, and strengthened to walk aright upon the narrow way, to fight valiantly, and to triumph gloriously over sin, death, hell, and the grave. Thank God for the Bible, His own precious Word, the word of the King of kings and of the Lord of lords, clearer than the sun of heaven, and able to save unto the uttermost all who believe it. Saints and sages, patriarchs and disciples have chosen it as their only light and lamp, and have found salvation in its life-giving words. Fools and infidels have despised it and have lost their way in mazes of error and damned themselves beyond hope or prospect of help. Let us choose the better part, with Mary let us continue to sit at Jesus' feet, and, looking up to those lips which utter naught but truth and light, let us say: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light upon my path."

Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
 For round us falls the eventide;
 Nor let Thy Word, that heavenly light,
 For us be ever veiled in night.

A trusty weapon is Thy Word,
 Thy Church's buckler, shield, and sword.
 Lord, let us in this Word abide,
 That we may seek *no other guide*.

O grant that in Thy holy Word
 We here may live and die, dear Lord,
 And when our journey endeth here
 Receive us into glory there!

Amen.

M. S. S.

Outlines for Sermons on the Gospel-Lessons.

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 22, 34—46.

Our text propounds two great questions—questions so great that, in all eternity, men will bear the consequences of the various answers that they may find. Surely, then, they are worthy of prayerful meditation. Let us hear

TWO GREAT QUESTIONS.

- I. *Which is the great commandment?*
- II. *What think ye of Christ?*

I.

1. The Pharisees disputed much about such questions in regard to the Law, having in mind, however, only the external observance of that Law.

2. The Savior answers by pointing out the sum and substance of the Law, and thus shows that the Law has to do with the inner man—the attitude of the soul toward God and His will.

3. From this viewpoint—the only correct one—there is no great and no small commandment, since every transgression of the Law is a condemning sin, because it shows lack of love toward God.

4. This answer should have prepared the questioners for the Savior's question. Their sins should have arisen before them, and they should have felt the need of a Savior. The Law should show us the need of the Gospel.

II.

1. The Savior's question, vv. 42—45, was to direct the attention of His hearers to the divine nature of the Messiah and to the spiritual nature of His kingdom. The Savior was "the son of David," true man; but He was also more, namely, David's Lord. And His kingdom was greater than David's, for David sees Him sitting at the right hand of God.

2. They should have gladly sought further instruction on this important matter instead of resting content with being dumbfounded.

3. The question is put to all of us: "What think ye of Christ?" Why do you belong to the Church, why do you profess to be a Lutheran Christian? Is it a matter simply of externals: of habit, of convenience, of temporal advantage? etc. Or is David's Son your Lord, your God, your Savior from sin? Do your deeds bear testimony of the faith that you profess?

G. A. R.

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 22, 1—14.

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables."
Our Lord was addressing the people in the temple on His last visit to Jerusalem. He had come into the city in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy as the King of the daughter of Zion. At the temple the triumphal procession halted, and the Lord dismounted and began to speak to the people. Daily He taught in the temple. This annoyed the chief priests and elders who beheld how glad the people were to hear Him and how they hailed in Him the promised Messiah. They came to the temple and disputed with Christ. They laid all sorts of traps for Him to entangle Him in His talk, but failed. Finally, Jesus spoke several parables in which He exposed the secret thoughts of His enemies that they plotted to kill Him, whereupon they left Him and went their way.

When the elders and priests were gone, Jesus continued His discourses and told the people a parable with a significant meaning and of universal interest. It is the parable of the King's marriage for His Son.

THE PARABLE OF THE KING'S MARRIAGE FOR HIS SON, AND THE LESSON IT TEACHES.

- I. *The parable with its interpretation.*
- II. *The lesson which the parable teaches.*

I.

The parable plainly refers to Jews and Gentiles.

a. That part of the parable which refers to the *Jews*, vv. 2—7. The King is God, the King's Son is the Lord Jesus Christ. For His beloved Son God sought out a bride and brought her to Him. As Eve was formed out of Adam, so out of Christ's wounded side a mystic woman was formed to enjoy His princely love and to share His glory. This woman is the Church. Every true believer is a part and parcel of that bride-chaste virgin. All have pledged their purest affection to the Lord and have promised to keep themselves to Him alone, forsaking all others.

The Church dates back to Adam. The first announcement of the marriage Gen. 3, 15. Again and again did God repeat this announcement and bade certain guests to the proposed marriage. These guests were the Jews. When the time came for the marriage to take place, when the eternal Son of God became man, God sent

forth His servants — John the Baptist, the seventy disciples — to the bidden guests, and informed them that the time of the wedding was at hand. But the leading men of the nation and the vast majority of the Jews would not accept Jesus as the promised Messiah. When the Lamb of God had been slain for the sins of the world, God again sent forth other servants, the apostles, to the Jews and bade them come and accept the salvation in the Savior Jesus. Again the leading men of the nation and the vast majority refused to come. They looked for a worldly Messiah and occupied their minds with earthly things. One went to his farm, another to his merchandise. And some were so exasperated as to stain their hands with the blood of God's messengers. Stephen and James were killed. Persecution was waged against the followers of Christ. God's wrath was aroused. The Romans were sent to destroy the city of Jerusalem. The Jews became a nation scattered abroad.

b. That part of the parable which deals with the *Gentiles*, vv. 8—10. From the Jews, who would not listen to them, the apostles turned to the Gentiles, Acts 13, 46. They traveled to distant lands and established Christian congregations among the heathen. Both, good and bad, are gathered into the Church. The Church proper consists of the good only, it is the communion of saints, but in its outward appearance it is a mixed body. (Tares among the wheat. Bad and good fishes in the net.)

To illustrate this imperfect state Christ adds a significant instance to the parable, vv. 11—14. It was the custom in the East to provide the guests at a royal wedding with a special garment to be worn at the occasion. A man refuses to put on the proffered garment because he thinks that his own apparel is good enough. The King is displeased with him and he is cast out. The interpretation of this part of the parable we shall hear presently.

II.

A twofold lesson we may take from this parable.

a. First lesson. Christ means to teach us that we should take warning from the Jews who would not accept God's invitation, and who were punished so severely for their ingratitude and for their ill treatment of God's servants. We have been called to enter Christ's kingdom, and to lead a life of holiness. What are we to expect if we let this golden opportunity pass by unimproved? How urgently does God press upon us His invitation, how amply are we provided with the bread of life! "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart."

b. Second lesson taught by the latter part of the parable. *α.* The interpretation. What is the wedding garment? We cannot fail in the interpretation if we turn to the Word of God. Is. 61, 10. Rev. 19, 7. 8. Rom. 3, 22. These passages throw a brilliant light on our parable. What the King failed to detect upon the man was Christ's righteousness wherewith we are endued by faith. *β.* The lesson. Christ means to teach us that our outward connection with the Church and our external deeds will not make us accepted with God. We must be members of the invisible Church, clothed in Christ's spotless righteousness, endowed with a true living faith. — May God grant us His grace that we all be with those who shall eat of the eternal manna and drink of the river of His pleasures.

H. S.

Miscellaneous.

Much time is wasted by the pastor in merely secular, social intercourse, even when going the rounds of his parish. Ostensibly, he is about the business of his profession, the care of souls; but really, he is merely acting the part of a courteous and polite gentleman. Even if he gives the subject of religion some attention, it is only at the close of his interview, after secular topics have been discussed. It may be that he shrinks from a direct address to an individual upon the concerns of his soul, and, therefore, as he thinks, prepares the way, that he may broach the difficult subject indirectly. He enters into a general and miscellaneous conversation, and if he comes to the subject of religion at all, it is only late and after the energy and briskness of the conversation have flagged. Moreover, the person to be addressed is quick to detect this shrinking upon the part of his pastor, and, if really unwilling to be spoken to upon the subject of religion, will adroitly lead the conversation away into other directions. The man who is averse to religious conversation, and who, therefore, specially needs to be directly and plainly addressed, is the last person to be surprised into such a conversation. His eyes are wide open, and the only true way for the pastor, when the proper time for it has come, and the pastoral visit is made, is to look him in the eye, and speak directly and affectionately upon the most momentous of all subjects. (Stedd, *Homiletic and Pastoral Theology*, p. 397.)
